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A. Ross Johnson

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TOTAL NATIONAL DEFENSE IN YUGOSLAVIA

A. Ross Johnson^{*}

The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California

The "Freedom-71" maneuvers were conducted in Yugoslavia in October 1971 -- the first large-scale military maneuvers held in the country since 1953. "Freedom-71" (observed by French Defense Minister Debre and foreign military attachés) simulated a thrust from the northeast by a powerful, highly mobile enemy into the hilly region southwest of Zagreb. The defender's regular units mounted a defense which slowed the enemy's tanks, amphibious carriers, and helicopter-borne troops; the defending units then withdrew to avoid a disastrous frontal battle. As the enemy pushed farther into the interior, however, it was resisted by a combination of regular, territorial, and irregular forces of the defender which, attacking from the flanks and the rear as well as the front, reversed the attack after an advance of 30 km in two days. The enemy's efforts to control occupied territory were frustrated by the total resistance of the population. The political authorities operated in simulated wartime conditions, directing local resistance from clandestine locations. The mass media also simulated wartime operations.

Yugoslav Doctrine

"Freedom-71" demonstrated the progress that Yugoslavia has made since 1968 in organizing for defense according to the conception of total national defense (*opštenarodna odbrana*). The distinctiveness of the approach is apparent if current Yugoslav defense preparations are compared with those of the early 1950s. Then, fearing a Soviet invasion, Yugoslavia carried out a massive conventional military

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buildup to almost a half-million men under arms, with a corresponding mobilization capacity. At the peak of the buildup, 1952, twenty-two percent of national income was devoted to defense. Yugoslavia received U.S. military assistance worth three-fourths of a billion dollars in the 1950's. But the improvement of Soviet-Yugoslav relations after 1955 led to a gradual deemphasis of defense in Yugoslavia, so that by 1968 less than six percent of national income went to defense and the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) had been reduced to nearly 200,000.

After August 1968, Yugoslavia's leaders found this defense capability to be quite inadequate for the altered international situation in which the country found itself. The invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact (Rumania abstaining) was viewed in Belgrade as evidence of a Soviet determination to throttle wherever possible independent Communist states and, as such, an "indirect attack" on Yugoslavia. Moreover, the Tito leadership well appreciated that the buildup of Soviet military power in the Mediterranean made Yugoslavia of greater geo-strategic importance to the USSR than formerly. Resolved to defend its position as an independent, non-aligned Communist state "with all available means,"* Yugoslavia sought to make this threat credible, and hence deter Soviet political pressure or invasion, by beefing up its defensive capabilities.

A renewed massive conventional military buildup was out of the question. Current economic difficulties, the unavailability (and political undesirability) of outside assistance, and the decentralized political system of the late 1960's (which meant that federal Yugoslavia's constituent republics opposed excessive concentration of power in Belgrade) all precluded the revival of a large-scale standing army. Even had Yugoslavia been able, economically and politically, to "afford" a large conventional force, Yugoslav military planners argued that it would be ill matched to the threat of a highly mobile Great Power (read: Soviet) military establishment in the 1970's. This was

* Resolution of the Tenth Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, *Review of International Affairs* (Belgrade), September 5, 1968.

the case because, in conventional terms, Yugoslavia would always be outmanned and outgunned and because the new threat posed by a highly mobile enemy required an effective mobilization capability of hours, not weeks. On the other hand, the planners argued, a modern conventional army is ill equipped to control territory. Accepting these arguments, Yugoslavia's political leadership turned to the concept of total national defense and (the most important institutional ramification of the doctrine) accepted a proposal publicly advanced earlier in Croatia for the formation in peacetime of a large-scale territorial defense force (TDF) -- in effect, territorial armies of citizen-soldiers organized by the republican political authorities.

The new doctrine, and the military organization and tactics designed to implement it, are still being worked out by the Yugoslav political and military authorities. Nevertheless, the major features of Yugoslavia's new approach to defense are already established. Total national defense rests on the premise that small and medium-size states must be self-reliant in defense if they are to maintain their sovereignty and can, if they have the national will and appropriate institutions to involve the entire citizenry in national defense, successfully resist (and thus quite likely deter) external attack. This is the philosophy underlying a provision of the Yugoslav Constitution which expressly forbids military capitulation or surrender of territory under any circumstances. The prohibition is restated in the revised National Defense Law of 1959, which provides, further, that it is the right and duty of every citizen to participate in national defense and the right and duty of the local political authorities "to organize total national defense and to command the battle directly."

In theory a Gaullist-like *la défense à tout azimuts*, in practice, as indicated above, Yugoslavia has adopted total national defense in order to deter or, if necessary, resist an attack from the East. As described by Yugoslav military writers,* this might take the form of an attack by a neighboring country (e.g., Bulgaria), supported only

*E.g., retired General S. Drljević, in *Novi Beograd* (Belgrade), April 1969.

indirectly by the USSR. In this scenario, the YPA itself would engage the enemy in frontal warfare and expel him from the country. The TDF in the affected border region would selectively assist the YPA; elsewhere in the country, the TDF would remain on alert in the event that the military threat increased.

Far more likely than the above scenario, according to Yugoslav military writers, is a massive *blitz* attack led by the USSR. In this case, the enemy would enjoy overwhelming military superiority in traditional terms. He can be expected to achieve general air superiority, to mount a massive armored land invasion, and to attempt to quickly seize Belgrade, Zagreb, and other key cities by parachute troops and helicopter-borne troops. In this scenario, the first task of the YPA, employing frontal tactics but avoiding large losses, would be to sufficiently delay enemy penetration (a matter of hours) for the country to carry out total mobilization. YPA units, withdrawing from border areas, would wage active defense in depth alongside the TDF throughout the country. The expected consequence would be a merging of front and rear, the transformation of the entire country into a "hedgehog." Having turned a *blitz* invasion into a protracted conflict, YPA and TDF units would fight on, utilizing a mixture of combined and partisan tactics. On "occupied" territory, both urban and rural, TDF and paramilitary forces would fight a guerrilla war. Only if an entire region of the country were occupied, however, would YPA and TDF units revert exclusively to partisan tactics, as in World War II. Following such a strategy, Yugoslav military writers maintain, an occupational force in excess of 8.5 soldiers per square kilometer, or two million men, would be required to truly subdue the country. Given the Central European balance of power, the Yugoslavs assume the enemy is most unlikely to deploy such a force in Southeastern Europe.

The Territorial Defense Force

The national defense law of 1969 gave legal sanction to territorial defense units created *ad hoc* in the fall of 1968. Legally and doctrinally co-equal with, and not subordinated to, the YPA, the TDF has subsequently expanded to a force of nearly one million, with a

force goal of three million (15 percent of the population) in the next few years. In building up the TDF, the main emphasis has been on company-sized units at the local (commune) level, organized by some 500 urban and rural communal authorities according to standards drawn up at the republican and, more loosely, the federal level. These TDF companies are intended for defense within the boundaries of the commune. In addition, "defense units" have been organized on a production basis in some 2000 large factories and other economic organizations (each of which is required, by law, to draw up peacetime and wartime plans for local defense). Factory defense units have the responsibility for performing some civil defense functions, defending the plant in the event of direct assault by airborne or other enemy troops, and merging with the communal TDF if the factory is captured. Separate youth units have been organized in some regions. Yugoslavia's constituent republics have also formed some larger (battalion-sized) highly mobile TDF units capable of defense throughout the respective republic; the desirability of forming more larger units of this type was voiced by Tito at the conclusion of "Freedom-71."

TDF units are subordinated to newly established defense commands, staffed by reserve YPA officers, at the communal and republican level, respectively. The communal commander is responsible both to the communal political authorities and to the higher, republican territorial defense command. The republican commands have considerable autonomy; ultimately they are subordinated to the federal Supreme Command. The TDF is hence not part of the YPA chain-of-command; local TDF units fall under YPA tactical command only when engaged in joint operations with YPA units. If an entire Yugoslav republic should be overrun by the enemy, the republican defense command would assume control of all military units on its territory -- YPA as well as TDF units. Reverting in part to their World War II experience, the Yugoslavs have constructed a command-and-control mechanism intended to insure that large-scale military resistance will continue even if the apex of the military command structure is destroyed.

Training for total national defense is carried on in communal training centers, where reserve YPA officers instruct TDF units;

active officers instruct the local command staff. TDF units are armed primarily with light anti-tank and anti-personnel weapons of indigenous manufacture, supplemented by heavier mobile anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons for battalion-size TDF units. Yugoslav military writers stress the value of sophisticated weaponry for the TDF (including infra-red and laser targeting devices, sensors, communications), for they expect the enemy to be prepared for "counter-insurgency." Until the TDF can be well supplied with modern weapons, however, the utility of even obsolete weapons captured in World War II is emphasized. Weapons are presently stored in mobilization centers, while personal equipment is kept at home, although dispersal of light weapons on the Swiss pattern is under consideration. Based on the experience of numerous smaller exercises preceding "Freedom-71," the Yugoslavs claim that half the existing TDF can be mobilized in 3-6 hours.

Civil Defense

The post-1968 attention to territorial defense in Yugoslavia has resulted in a deemphasis of civil defense as conceived in the early 1960's. Large-scale evacuation of cities is no longer envisaged. According to the new doctrine, since half the Yugoslav population now live in towns and cities, they too must be defended no less than the countryside. Furthermore, the TDF has taken over some activities, such as intelligence and warning, which formerly were the responsibility of the civil defense organization. On the other hand, Yugoslav doctrine envisages an important role for civil defense forces, incorporating, in one form or another, the entire able-bodied population not included in the YPA or TDF. The national defense law of 1969 stipulates that each commune must form a civil defense organization, subordinate to the communal defense command. The civil defense organization is subdivided into engineering, sanitation, radiation-chemical-biological-defense, fire-fighting, veterinary, evacuation, and security units. The primary functions of the civil defense organization in the new system are fire-fighting, public health, shelter, and limited evacuation (wounded, children, and the aged).

The Role of the YPA

Acceptance of total national defense in Yugoslavia has signified a profound change in the role of the regular armed forces, the YPA. It is testimony to both the flexibility of outlook of the YPA senior officer corps and the YPA's institutional subordination to the League of Communists and Tito personally that the YPA has apparently adapted to the new system of national defense without undue friction. The fundamental departure from earlier practice is the fact that the YPA is no longer the Yugoslav military institution, but now is complemented by a larger TDF which is doctrinally and legally co-equal with and not -- even in wartime -- subordinate to the YPA. On the other hand, Yugoslav doctrine does not call for the transformation of the YPA into a professional training corps for a single army of citizen-soldiers, as in Switzerland. As indicated by the scenarios described above, the active YPA must be able on its own both to resist a limited incursion and to sufficiently delay a massive attack for the country to carry out total mobilization. In the latter case, thereafter the YPA will wage active defense in depth throughout the country. It will transform itself into smaller units waging predominately partisan warfare alongside the TDF only if larger-unit combat fails to dissuade the enemy from continuing his attempt to control the country.

This fundamental change in the YPA's role in national defense has, in turn, given rise to specific changes in YPA organization. First, judging by Yugoslav military writings, the YPA will undergo some further reduction in size, while being turned into a more mobile, better-armed force. While the Air Force (part of the unified YPA) might aspire to a role similar to that of the Swedish air force, this exceeds Yugoslavia's economic capabilities. Doctrinal as well as economic limitations have led the Navy to abandon earlier plans for expansion of a Mediterranean capability in favor of coastal and island defense. The major goal of continued modernization of the YPA is the development of a modern mobile infantry, well-armed with anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons. As in the past, most weapons will be of indigenous manufacture. At the same time, political and military leaders alike insist that it would

be pointless for Yugoslavia to attempt to compete with a Great Power in tanks, aircraft, or other heavy modern weaponry and that modernization of the YPA must not delay the arming of the TDF.

Second, the buildup of the TDF has meant a relative deemphasis of YPA reserves. Presently, 80 percent of YPA conscripts are subsequently assigned to the TDF; 20 percent to the active or reserve YPA. Third, the nature of military maneuvers has changed markedly. In the early 1960's, YPA maneuvers usually simulated conventional defense of cities, including mass evacuation of noncombatants. In the past three years, in contrast, maneuvers have usually involved joint defense by YPA and TDF units against large-scale armored invasion (in Southeast Vojvodina, a large plain bordering on Hungary and Rumania) or airborne assault (elsewhere in the country). "Freedom-71" was the first mass test of the new defensive system; Tito promised at its conclusion that, in the future, such large-scale war games would be scheduled regularly. Fourth, the YPA has begun to transfer some support functions -- medical care, food supply, some engineering services -- to the TDF or the civilian sector.

Total National Defense as Deterrence

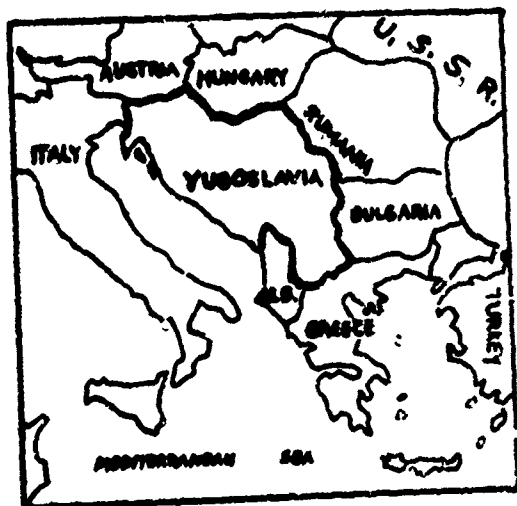
Yugoslavia still has some way to go in elaborating details of the doctrine of total national defense and translating doctrine into organizational and institutional change. The Eighteenth Session of the League of Communists' Presidium (June 1971) analyzed the weaknesses in the implementation of total national defense to date. These included a continued tendency within the YPA to overemphasize its role in the new system of defense, neglect of nonmilitary forms of resistance as a consequence of the campaign to organize the TDF, scarcity of funds for territorial defense in some regions (such funds are raised locally, and are not included in the federal defense budget), and continued problems in ensuring full equality of Yugoslavia's many national and ethnic groups in the military services, including TDF commands. The significant progress to date was demonstrated by "Freedom-71."

Appraising both strengths and weaknesses of a potential super-power invasion force and making a virtue of economic and political necessity, Yugoslavia is in the midst of organizing its entire able-bodied population for total national defense as the most effective way to deter an external threat. Total national defense, while incorporating aspects of the Yugoslav Communists' World War II Partisan experience, represents more than a nostalgic revival of successes twenty-five years old. It is an effort to apply principles of "people's war" (which Tito pioneered, no less than Mao, Ho, or Guevara) to a consolidated, semi-industrialized state faced with the possibility of external aggression by a much stronger enemy, taking into account domestic and international political and economic realities and the state of contemporary military technology.

More concretely, Yugoslavia seeks to deter Soviet political threats or invasion, now and in the post-Tito period, by demonstrating that a Czechoslovak-like road march into Yugoslavia is not possible; that an invasion would have unpredictable consequences; that an occupation effort would be bloody, prolonged, and expensive in terms of manpower and materiel; and that, if a *blitz* invasion were indeed transformed into a protracted conflict in Europe in which Yugoslavia would seek outside assistance, it would involve a risk of superpower confrontation.

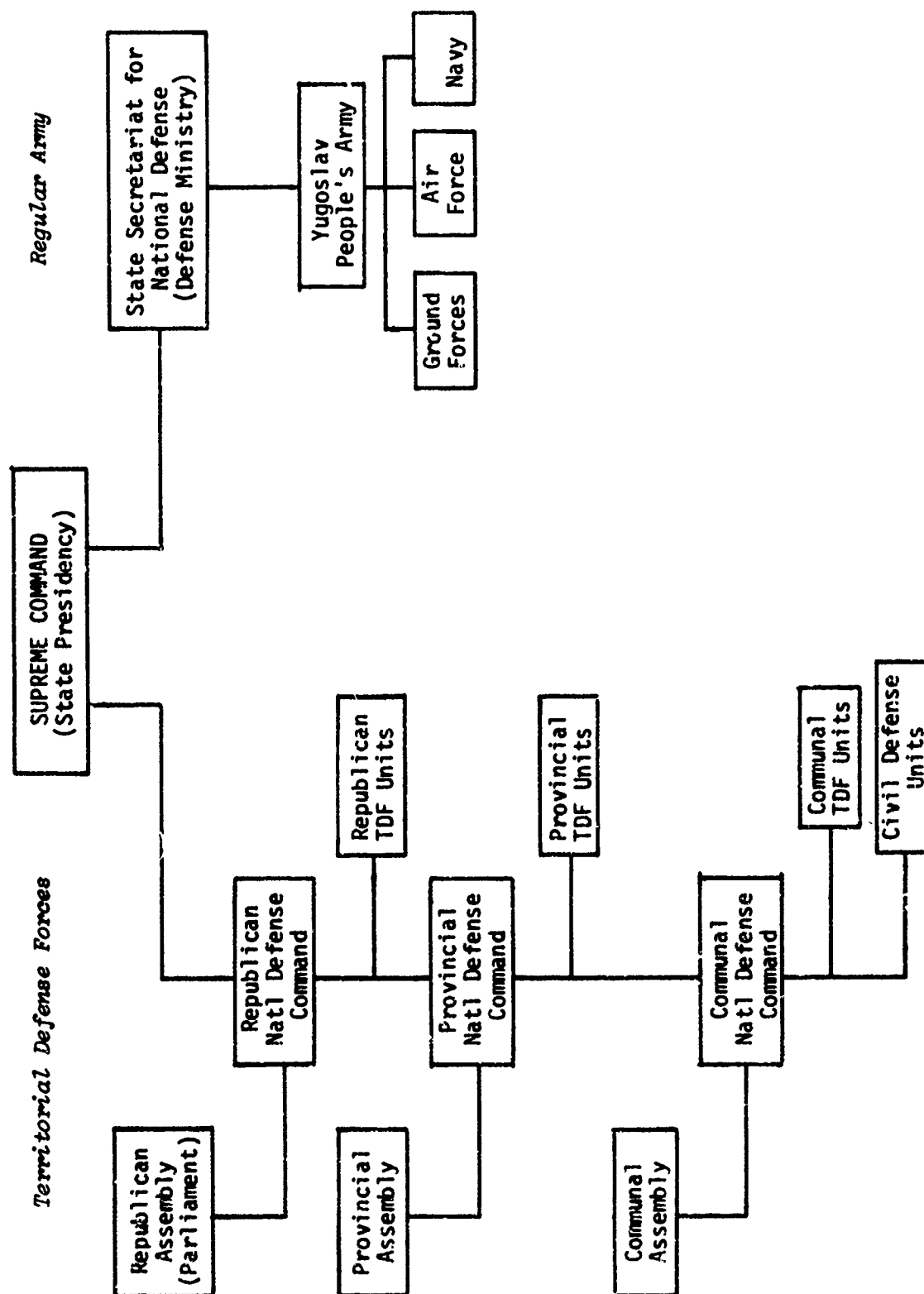
YUGOSLAVIA

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ORGANIZATION OF THE YUGOSLAV ARMED FORCES



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